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Editorial: Downtown rejuvenated

THE ISSUE

Kokomo has made major investments in its downtown area.

OUR VIEW

This is already paying dividends, and will continue to do so for years to come.

What a difference a few years can make. Once a dying commercial and residential sector, downtown Kokomo has turned things around and the signs of success are everywhere.

This dramatic shift was documented in a front page story we published Tuesday by current Anderson Herald Bulletin reporter and former Kokomo Tribune reporter Ken de la Bastide. In the story, which was originally published in that paper's "Raising Downtown" series, de la Bastide outlines the varied efforts by Kokomo's leaders to revitalize the core of our community, including the construction of the new YMCA building, the downtown minor league baseball stadium, parking garage with apartments and three other housing developments, among others.

"It is the oldest and most historic part of the city," Greg Goodnight, Kokomo mayor, told de la Bastide. "Developers interested in locating in Kokomo want to see the downtown and see how we're taking care of the oldest part of the city. The downtown is the center of your community and belongs to everyone. It has the potential to have the most pedestrian traffic in a concentrated area."

This is our community at its best. The county's rent abatement program is just one example of our community's efforts to improve its heart and soul.

"The city of Kokomo and Howard County have partnered for the past four years to attract new businesses downtown," reported de la Bastide. "The Howard County Commissioners provided a \$5,000 grant as part of a rent abatement program for new businesses coming into Kokomo, Greentown or Russiaville. The county budgets \$35,000 each year from Economic Development Income Tax revenues to fund the program. If a business decides to move out within the first three years, grant funds are to be repaid."

Credit is due to those in our community with the long-range vision to help these ideas become reality. Outward growth means nothing to a city with a rotten core. Kokomo is far from the only community in this country to struggle with this problem. What makes us different is our response.